Seward & 36th
IMPROVEMENTS

FAQs

Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Intersection Improvements

AKSAS Project No:54629

June 2014

Project Goals

Improve traffic flow in Midtown and on the Seward Highway

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Shorten travel times to and from Midtown and U-Med

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Improve safety by reducing crash rates

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Improve safety and travel for bicycles and pedestrians

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Why is DOT&PF working on this project?**

   » *Answer: The Seward Highway at 36th Avenue is one of the busiest intersections in the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA). More than 55,000 vehicles travel through the intersection every day. The intersection also ranks second highest in the MOA for the number of vehicle collisions. The Seward Highway and 36th Avenue are state-owned and maintained roadways. Improving traffic flow and safety on this intersection is a high priority for the State, MOA, and for the traveling public.*

2. **How many alternatives were considered as part of the decision-making process?**

   » *Answer: Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) started with five alternatives under consideration. After talking with area business owners, the public, and DOT&PF leadership, the number increased to 18. DOT&PF evaluated each of the alternatives based on 12 different quantifiable categories ranging from cost, to operations, maintenance, ease of use, and property impacts. The three highest ranked possible alternatives are the Hybrid Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI), the Half SPUI, and the Loop Ramp Interchange (see www.sewardand36th.com/resources/ for maps of each of the three alternatives).*

3. **Why don't the alternatives include northbound on-ramps onto the highway?**

   » *Answer: 36th Avenue is separated from Benson Boulevard by less than 1/2 a mile. Because of this tight area, there is not enough room for traffic to enter the highway safely and efficiently. Onbound traffic would compete for gaps with through traffic. We can move traffic more effectively from the south-bound entrance ramp because of the grade separation at Tudor, which precludes some of the cross-traffic movements. It may be possible to construct the north-bound highway access in the future should a grade-separated access be constructed at Benson/Northern Lights.*

4. **How many vehicles turn northbound onto the highway from 36th Avenue currently?**

   » *Answer: During peak AM traffic (8 - 9 am), approximately 170 vehicles turn right onto the highway off of 36th Avenue (westbound) and 150 vehicles turn left onto the highway from 36th Avenue (eastbound). During the evening peak hour (4:45 - 5:45 pm), 200 vehicles turn right onto the highway off of 36th Avenue (westbound) and 290 vehicles turn left onto the highway from 36th Avenue (eastbound). Much of the traffic backup west of the Old Seward Highway is from traffic trying to merge into the two north-bound turn lanes in the 0.08 mile distance between the Old and New Seward Highways.*

5. **Did DOT&PF consider placing the Seward Highway below ground level and keeping 36th Avenue at-grade?**

   » *Answer: Yes. The Seward-under alternative is not cost-feasible with our current budgets for construction or maintenance. The groundwater level in the project area is very high. Trenching the highway would put the roadway about five feet below ground water level, which would require watertight construction to avoid impacting the surrounding water table level. Further, constructing the Seward Highway under 36th and coming back up to existing grades at Benson and Tudor would create a bathtub effect for all storm drain, runoff, and snow melt. This would require a lift station to remove the excess water and greatly increase maintenance costs. Utilities in the area would be impacted by this alternative as well, and a sewer pump station would likely be needed, adding additional maintenance and operation costs.*

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Project Cost

The Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Intersection Improvements Project is state funded. The three alternatives under consideration are estimated to cost between $50-$70 million each. Cost estimates will be further defined as design progresses and more detail is developed. Construction of the final alternative will begin pending funding availability.

Public Involvement

DOT&PF plans to keep the public informed of project progress via e-newsletters, the project website, meetings, and interviews. Please visit our website at:

www.sewardand36th.com

to sign up for our mailing list. Stay tuned for more details on future events and opportunities to provide feedback.

Contact

Visit www.sewardand36th.com to learn more about this project and to find out how to send us your comments, ideas, or questions. Call or e-mail:

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Frequently Asked Questions *continued...*

6. **Could 36th Avenue go over the Seward Highway?**
   - » *Answer: Taking 36th Avenue over Seward Highway has its own complications. Mainly, it would cut off access and have a significant negative effect to many of the businesses in the surrounding area.*

7. **Raising Seward Highway over 36th Avenue could make highway noise louder. Has the project team considered noise mitigation measures?**
   - » *Answer: Preliminary noise data has been collected and a noise model will be conducted once the final design alternative is selected. Depending on the results, DOT&PF would consider using noise walls, rubberized pavement, or other noise mitigating design elements to help reduce noise impacts. DOT&PF has found, however, that noise levels tend to go down when the starting and stopping of vehicles is reduced.*

8. **How high will the overpass over 36th Avenue be?**
   - » *Answer: The bridge at the location of the current Seward/36th Intersection would be 25-30' high, depending on noise walls and rails. The area of the highest elevation will be at 36th Avenue, away from houses. An 800' ramp leading up to the bridge would have a gradual grade change (less than 3 percent) and be supported by a retaining wall.*

9. **Do the proposed alternatives provide bicycle and pedestrian crossings?**
   - » *Answer: Each of the three alternatives under consideration would provide better bicycle and pedestrian access than today's intersection. For instance, the Half-SPUI alternative provides unimpeded access on the north-side of 36th Avenue allowing pedestrians the ability to travel between the CH2MHill building and the Old Seward Highway Intersection without stopping. The Hybrid SPUI has one traffic island on the north-side of 36th.*

10. **How would construction at other interchanges affect traffic along the Seward Highway?**
    - » *Answer: The Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Intersection Improvements Project will rely on future intersection improvements along the highway for optimal operations in the long-term. However, improvements to the Benson/Northern Lights couplet, LaTouche, and other intersections are included as part of the AMATS Long Range Transportation Plan. Implementation of these additional projects will keep the Seward Highway: 36th Avenue intersection functioning at an acceptable Level of Service through 2035.*

11. **Will there be a bike trail between Tudor and 36th Avenue to connect the existing trail system?**
    - » *Answer: DOT&PF is working with the MOA and others on the possibility of adding a bike trail connection between Tudor and 36th Avenue. Bicyclists and pedestrians will be able to cross 36th Avenue at the traffic signal.*